



October 31, 2008

Katharine London
Executive Director
Health Care Quality and Cost Council
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
2 Boylston Street, 5th floor
Boston, MA 02116

RE: Testimony on Quality and Cost Website Plan

Dear Ms. London and Quality and Cost Council Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Health Care Quality and Cost Council on its plan for the upcoming quality and cost website. The Consumer Health Quality Council and Health Care For All have been very appreciative of the opportunities to be involved in this process. In particular, we would like to thank Ms. London for providing the Consumer Health Quality Council the opportunity to view the website and give feedback from the consumer perspective. We look forward to continuing to work with the Quality and Cost Council as the website is launched.

Consumer Health Quality Council Overview

The Consumer Health Quality Council, a Health Care For All coalition, was created in the fall of 2006 and has had many accomplishments over the past two years. The Consumer Council consists of individual consumers who have experienced poor quality care, either directly or through loved ones, and who are motivated by those experiences to advocate for better quality care for all residents of Massachusetts. The Consumer Council is particularly proud of the legislative victory it achieved when Governor Patrick signed into law Chapter 305, "*An Act to Promote Cost Containment, Transparency and Efficiency in the Delivery of Quality Health Care.*" This law includes a number of quality improvement provisions for which the Consumer Council advocated throughout the legislative session. In addition to legislative advocacy, the group has been gathering personal stories in various formats (written, oral, video), sponsoring public forums and educational events, and speaking to the media.

Comments on the Website Content

Members of the Consumer Council had the opportunity to view the website in mid-August and provided comments. Two themes emerged from many of the comments: the website must be easy for consumers to navigate and word choice should be carefully considered so as to minimize confusion and maximize understanding and ease of use. One example relating to the ease of navigation is that some consumers were unable to determine how to start a new search. Especially for consumers who are less familiar with the Internet, there should be clear options for starting a new search, going to another page, and other ways to navigate the site. In terms of word choice, a number of the

consumers pointed out that “provider” refers to hospitals when used on the website. There was confusion as to whether provider referred to a hospital or individual providers.

The Consumer Council members who tested the website are a savvy group when it comes to Internet use and understanding of the healthcare system. We urge you to continue testing the website, even after it is launched, with other groups of consumers so that you can assess its ease of use and comprehension with a broader cross-section of the population.

Website Launch and Beyond

We are looking forward to the unveiling of the Quality and Cost Council’s website, and we will be ready to participate in informing the public about the existence of the website and helping them to navigate and best utilize the site. We strongly recommend that the Quality and Cost Council do extensive outreach to consumer and health care organizations. The community health centers can greatly assist in helping their clients to access the information and utilize it. Other consumer groups, inside and outside of healthcare, can also assist, including immigration policy groups, mental and behavioral health organizations, children’s health organizations and legal rights groups. We would also strongly suggest the Council make sure to include many of these groups in an ongoing focus group process.

Beyond the launch, we recommend that the Council continue to assess the site for accessibility across education levels and to those with limited proficiency in English. We also encourage the Council to eventually provide the cost and quality information in languages other than English. The Council should also explore options other than a website for getting this information out to the public. Some of the groups that may most need the information, such as the elderly and those with disabilities, may have limited access to the Internet.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony and for your commitment to improving the quality of health care in Massachusetts. We eagerly anticipate the launch of the website. We look forward to continuing to work together to improve the quality of care across the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



Lucilia Prates Ramos
Chair, Consumer Health Quality Council
Health Care for All Board Member



Deb Wachenheim
Health Quality Manager
Health Care For All